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Book Reviews

Herman, Edwin B., 2004, Recent advances in plant tissue culture volumes VIII and IX, Volume VIII microbial "Contaminants" in Plant Tissue Cultures: Solutions and Opportunities 1996 – 2003, Agritech Consultants Inc., Agrilec Report, P O Box 255 Shrub Oak, NY 10588, USA (116 pages, loose leaf, Price $83 plus shipping and handling, Email: Agritech@AgritechPublications.com, Website: www.AgritechPublications.com)
Herman, Edwin B., 2005, Volume IX Media and Techniques for Growth Regeneration and Storage 2002 – 2005, Agritech Consultants Inc., Agricell Report, P O Box 255, Shrub Oak, NY 10588, USA (129 pages, loose leaf, Price $97 plus shipping and handling, Email: Agritech@AgritechPublications.com, Website: www.AgritechPublications.com)

These two volumes have now been added to this series. Volume VIII contains very useful information and has been itemized in four Chapters. Chapter One deals with sources of contamination, its detection and identification, and a very useful section on latent contamination. Chapter Two gives extensive information on methods to eliminate contamination of not only microbes, but also mites and thrips, nematodes and viruses from a whole range of cultivars. This information is valuable to have within a single reference and will be useful to both new and established tissue culturists. A large part of volume VIII covers non-axenic tissue culture. Here there is extensive information on the advantages of co-culture with micro-organisms both for micropropagation and the production of secondary products.

In Volume IX the author covers many aspects related to tissue culture media. This is followed by a second Chapter covering many new techniques and systems in order to deal with a protoplast culture, the use of markers for somatic hybridization, bioreactor systems for cell culture, root culture techniques, control of explant browning, somaclonal variation, chromosome doubling and the control of sex expression in regenerated shoots. There is a wealth of information in this Chapter and all tissue culturists would be well advised to read this section. It is easy to read and nicely referenced.

In Chapter Three, considerable attention is given to the chemical, physical and biological environments of plant cultures. This volume ends with very important aspects related to commercialization of plants. Cryopreservation for shipping and long term storage of material, the production of synthetic seeds and lastly shipping techniques.

The volumes are easy to read, well constructed and all students would be well advised to spend a little time in reading them prior to embarking on their projects. These two volumes will prove to be most useful as a preliminary reference before entering into a lengthy literature review as they certainly point you in the right direction.

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Ben-Erik van Wyk, Food plants of the world, Identification, culinary uses and nutritional value, Briza Publications, PO Box 56569, Arcadia 0007, Pretoria, South Africa, 2005, 480 pages, including photographs and chemical structures, ISBN 1-875093-56-7, Internet: www.briza.co.za

This is a book about plants that are consumed as foods around the world — a mini encyclopedia of 354 commercially important food and flavour plants in common use. The reader is treated to a broad, yet scientifically accurate, overview of food plants in a compact and colourful format.

By way of an introduction, there is a brief account of the origins of agriculture and a list of the 12 regions of diversity (including the most important economic plants from each region). There follows an explanation of the nutritional importance of cereals; pulses/legumes; nuts and seeds; fruits; vegetables; culinary herbs; sugars, gums, gels and starches; beverages; and spices and flavours. The body of the book describes each plant, providing details of its origin and history; parts used; cultivation and harvesting; culinary uses and properties; and nutritional value. The plants are listed alphabetically by their scientific names, although, for the non-botanists, there are lists that cross-reference common and scientific names in the introductory pages. The importance of nutrients in diet and health are explored briefly towards the end of the book.

The book clearly meets its objectives. It provides, in a portable format, a comprehensive list of "commercially important plants that are regularly cultivated or wild-